



**IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE EASTERN DISTRICT OF VIRGINIA
Norfolk Division**

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	)	Criminal No. 2:23-cr- 142
)	
v.	)	18 U.S.C. § 1344 and 2
)	
CRISTIAN RISTEA,	)	Bank Fraud
)	
a/k/a "Christan Weber"	)	(Count 1-3)
)	
Defendant.	)	18 U.S.C. § 1028A
)	
	)	Aggravated Identity Theft
)	
	)	(Counts 4-5)
)	
	)	18 U.S.C. § 1029(a)(3)
)	
	)	Possession of Fifteen or More
)	
	)	Counterfeit or Unauthorized
)	
	)	Access Devices
)	
	)	(Count 6)
)	
	)	18 U.S.C. § 982(a)(2)
)	
	)	Criminal Forfeiture

INDICTMENT

November 2023 Term – At Norfolk, Virginia

THE GRAND JURY CHARGES THAT:

GENERAL ALLEGATIONS

At all times material and relevant to this indictment:

1. From at least in or about August 2023, the earliest time being unknown, CRISTIAN RISTEA, defendant herein, installed and maintained portable card reading devices (“skimming devices”) inside ATM machines within the Eastern District of Virginia.

2. Skimming devices read and record the information encoded on the magnetic strip of all access devices used at the targeted ATM machines by legitimate customers during the period in which such devices are affixed to those card-reading apparatuses. Such information

includes, but is not limited to, personal identification and financial information such as bank, credit, and debit card account information, including the corresponding custody Personal Identification Number (“PIN”) access codes as they are entered by legitimate customers in the course of transactions at ATM locations.

COUNTS ONE- THREE
(Bank Fraud)

3. Paragraphs 1 through 2 of the General Allegations section of this Indictment are incorporated by reference as though fully set forth herein.

4. From at least in or about August 2023, the earliest time being unknown, CRISTIAN RISTEA, defendant herein, and others unknown, for the purpose of executing and attempting to execute a scheme and artifice to defraud and to obtain money, funds, credits, assets, securities owned by and under the custody and control of a financial institution as defined under Title 18, United States Code, Section 20, by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations and promises in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344. This scheme and artifice operated in substance as follows:

PURPOSE OF THE SCHEME

5. The purpose of the scheme and artifice to defraud was for RISTEA and others unknown, to obtain money to which he was not entitled to by installing skimming devices, obtaining victims’ personal identification and financial information, and using the personal identification and financial information to obtain money, funds, credits, assets, and securities owned by and under the custody and control of the victims’ respective financial institutions.

WAYS, MANNER, AND MEANS

The ways, manner, and means by which RISTEA carried out the scheme and artifice to defraud included, but were not limited to, the following:

6. RISTEA and others used the recording, acquisition, transfer, and use of means of identification and financial information belonging to other individuals and entities in order to obtain United States currency from financial institutions and other entities and other benefits, from entities and individuals.

7. RISTEA and others fraudulently obtained the personal identification and financial information of various individuals and entities, including bank, credit, and debit card account information and PIN access codes, without the consent of such individuals and entities, by various means, including the installation of skimming devices at ATMs of financial institutions within the Eastern District of Virginia and elsewhere.

8. RISTEA and others used such personal identification and financial information to obtain unauthorized access to the bank, credit, and debit card account information of other individuals and entities by, among other things, re-encoding account numbers, including but not limited to ATM and debit account numbers, onto the magnetic strips of other cards, and then using such re-encoded cards in combination with the corresponding PIN access codes to make unauthorized withdrawals and transfers from the bank accounts and credit accounts of other individuals and entities, thereby compromising such accounts and withdrawing and otherwise transferring funds and credit to the benefit of the defendant and others.

9. RISTEA used the personal identification and financial information recorded by the skimming devices installed and maintained by defendant and others at ATM locations within the Eastern District of Virginia and elsewhere.

10. RISTEA traveled to and through, the Eastern District of Virginia from locations outside the Commonwealth of Virginia in furtherance for purposes of executing, attempting to execute, and continuing the scheme and artifice.

11. On or about the dates and in the manner set forth below, CRISTIAN RISTEA, and others unknown, aided and abetted by one another and others, did knowingly and intentionally for the purpose of executing the aforesaid scheme and artifice to defraud and to obtain moneys, funds, credits, assets, securities owned by and under the custody and control of the following financial institutions, each of which qualifies as a financial institution as defined under Title 18, United States Code, Section 20, by means of materially false and fraudulent pretenses, representations, and promises, and attempted to do so.

<u>Count</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Financial Institution</u>	<u>Description/Purpose of Transaction</u>
ONE	August 9, 2023	BayPort Credit Union	RISTEA and others used information of D.J. to make an unauthorized cash withdrawal of approximately \$500 at an ATM in Hampton, Virginia.
TWO	August 9, 2023	BayPort Credit Union	RISTEA and others used information of J.B. to attempt to make an unauthorized withdrawal of approximately \$360, at an ATM in Hampton, Virginia
THREE	August 17, 2023	Bank of America	RISTEA and others used information of V.P. to make an unauthorized withdrawal of approximately \$140, at an ATM in Chesapeake, Virginia

(All in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1344 and 2.)

COUNTS FOUR-FIVE
 (Aggravated Identity Theft)

12. Paragraphs 1 through 2 of the General Allegations section of this Indictment are incorporated by reference as though fully set forth herein.
13. On or about the dates and in the manner set forth below, in the Eastern District of Virginia and elsewhere, the defendant, CRISTIAN RISTEA, did unlawfully, knowingly and intentionally, transfer, possess, and use, without lawful authority, a means of identification of another person, during and in relation to a felony violation of provisions contained in Chapter 63 of Title 18 of the United States Code, to wit: Bank Fraud, in violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1344.

Count	Date (on or about)	Means of Identification	Description/Purpose of Transaction	Felony Violation(s)
FOUR	August 9, 2023	Access Device Number of D.J. (last four digits 7431)	Defendant used the access device number (last four digits 7431) of D.J. to make an unauthorized withdrawal of approximately \$500 from a Bayport Credit Union account belonging to D.J.	18 U.S.C. § 1344 (ref. Count 1)
FIVE	August 17, 2023	Access Device Number of V.P. (last four digits 0773)	Defendant used the access device number (last four digits 0773) of V.P. to make an unauthorized withdrawal of approximately \$140 from a Bank of America account belonging to V.P.	18 U.S.C. § 1344 (ref. Count 3)

(In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Sections 1028A(a)(1) and (c)(5) and 2.)

COUNT SIX
(Possession of Unauthorized Access Devices)

On or about August 17, 2023, in the Eastern District of Virginia, and elsewhere, the defendant, CRISTIAN RISTEA, knowingly and with the intent to defraud, possessed at least fifteen unauthorized access devices, to wit, over 500 credit and debit card numbers, card verification numbers, and pin numbers, said possession affecting interstate and foreign commerce in that those credit and debit cards were issued on behalf of financial institutions that facilitate interstate and foreign commerce.

(In violation of Title 18, United States Code, Section 1029(a)(3).)

FORFEITURE

THE GRAND JURY FURTHER FINDS PROBABLE CAUSE THAT:

1. The defendant, if convicted of any of the violations alleged in Counts One through Three and Six of this indictment, shall forfeit to the United States, as part of the sentencing pursuant to Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 32.2, any property constituting, or derived from, proceeds obtained directly or indirectly, as the result of the violation.

2. The defendant, if convicted of either of the violations alleged in Count Six of this indictment, shall forfeit to the United States, as part of the sentencing pursuant to Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 32.2, any personal property used or intended to be used to commit the violation.

3. If any property that is subject to forfeiture above is not available, it is the intention of the United States to seek an order forfeiting substitute assets pursuant to Title 21, United States Code, Section 853(p) and Federal Rule of Criminal Procedure 32.2(e).

(In accordance with Title 18, United States Code, Sections 982(a)(2) and 1029(c)(1)(C).)

UNITED STATES v. CRISTIAN RISTEA
Criminal No. 2:23cr 142

Pursuant to the E-Government Act,
the original of this page has been filed
under seal in the Clerk's Office.

A TRUE BILL:

REDACTED COPY

FOREPERSON

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